

Superior TELEGRAM

Published June 11, 2010 (pages 1 and 2)

Programs offer options for reduced meal costs

School's out for summer. For some families, that means making grocery dollars stretch farther to cover breakfast and lunch for their children. Help can be found through free youth meals and community-based food-buying clubs.

By: [Maria Lockwood](#), Superior Telegram mlockwood@superiortelegram.com

School's out for summer.

For some families, that means making grocery dollars stretch farther to cover breakfast and lunch for their children. Help can be found through free youth meals and community-based food-buying clubs.

Two local branches of non-profit food-buying networks offer a lot of food for a minimal price. Both the SHARE program and Angel Food Ministries provide a "hand up" to clients with savings of up to 50 percent on food purchased.

"I think it's really reasonable," said Melissa Vagle of Superior, who has utilized the SHARE program for more than two years. "You get a lot of food for the money."

"It really stretches the dollar," said Diane Bye of Duluth, an Angel Food Ministries client.

Both volunteer-run programs give clients a wide selection of food to choose from each month – from fresh fruit and vegetables to name brand meat products. It's not discounted or outdated food, according to the directors of both programs. The savings come from buying the food in season and in bulk.

"From the customer's perspective, it's good stuff," Vagle said.

Bye said the boxes offer "a great variety."

"All the products are of very good quality," agreed Mike Blaylock of Solon Springs. He stumbled onto the SHARE program in January while earning free Disneyland passes. To get the passes, he and his family needed to volunteer somewhere. They chose SHARE, which had a distribution site four blocks away from their home in the Solon Springs Community Center. Impressed by what they saw, they started ordering the packages themselves.

"I think it's fantastic," Blaylock said.

Both SHARE and Angel Food Ministries give clients convenient ordering options every month – from online credit card orders to in-person cash exchanges. Money orders and food stamp cards are also accepted. SHARE, in addition, takes checks.

Best of all, the programs are all-inclusive.

"There are absolutely no requirements," said Cathy Beebe of Superior, director of Superior's Angel Food Ministries site at St. Alban's Church. "I am inviting everyone to participate."

The goal of Angel Food Ministries, which began in the south and has grown to encompass 42 states, is to give as many people as possible relief from the high cost of groceries.

SHARE, a 25-year-old program based out of Milwaukee, serves nearly 200 communities throughout Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota and Michigan with the same aim.

"Our biggest challenge has been to get people to understand that this is an everybody thing," said Karen Arthur, regional volunteer trainer for 11 SHARE distribution sites in the Twin Ports area. "You can be a millionaire and do this."

There are a few differences between the programs. SHARE offers clients the option of picking and choosing individual items to order. The customization, Arthur said, really appeals to customers.

Angel Food Ministries offers a large number of specialty boxes – 10 this month — as well as the signature box. Beebe said that, as a diabetic, she appreciates the convenience meals pack which was developed with the dietary needs of seniors and diabetics in mind. Bye plans to order an after school pack this month, loaded with quick snacks for her grandchildren.

SHARE offers more distribution locations. After an article about the program hit the front page of the Duluth News Tribune about a year ago, participation in SHARE exploded. The program now has distribution sites in Solon Springs, Iron River and Superior and many Minnesota locations. Arthur typically collects between \$15,000 and \$25,000 in orders each month.

Angel Food Ministries currently distributes about 120 boxes a month out of St. Alban's Church. Beebe hopes the program will grow. She would like to see churches and community groups in the area step up to host distribution sites.

"Any church within a 10-mile radius is encouraged to partner with us," Beebe said.

SHARE used to require a volunteer component from all clients. While help at distribution sites is appreciated, Arthur said, customers can also take a few SHARE newsletters and hand them out to let more people know about the program.

Everyone contacted for this article said they have encouraged others to join their respective food-buying programs. Each person they have talked into trying the programs, they say, has been hooked.

Blaylock said anyone unsure about ordering should stop by a distribution site and take a look at the food heading out the door.

“See what it’s like for yourself,” he said.

Ordering Information

Angel Food ministries

Angel Food Ministries and order forms are available online at www.angelfoodministries.com. Orders are taken in person at St. Alban’s Church three Wednesdays and one weekend a month including 10am to 2pm Saturday, 9am to Noon Sunday and 6-8pm Wednesday for June. Online, place orders by June 20. Distribution runs noon to 1:30pm June 26th at the church, 1510 New York Avenue. For information, contact Beebe at (715)392-2536, (715) 394-5186 or cbeebe@uwsuper.edu.

SHARE

SHARE program and order forms are available online at www.sharewi.org. You can order via credit or debit card at the site. Order forms are also available at the Superior Business Center, 1423 N Eighth St. A SHARE volunteer, Gene Oliver, will be at the site 10am to 4pm today. Call (218) 727-2088 to have an order form mailed to you or for more information. June orders are taken through Sunday with distribution the morning of June 26th. Douglas County distribution sites include the Solon Springs Community Center, Iron River VFW Hall, and Superior’s Peter Rich Center, 1219 E. Eighth Street. Pick up time is 7:30-8:30am in Solon Springs, 10:30am-Noon in Superior and 10-11am in Iron River.

There are no income requirements to participate in either program.